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General Assembly

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Fifty-second Session

38th plenary meeting
Wednesday, 29 October 1997, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Udovenko ..... (Ukraine)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 8 *(continued)*

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work

Request for the inclusion of an additional item

Note by the Secretary-General (A/52/234)

The President: In his note circulated in document A/52/234, the Secretary-General has the honour to request, pursuant to rule 15 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, the inclusion in the agenda of the fifty-second session of an item entitled "Financing of the United Nations Observer Mission in Angola".

Owing to the nature of the item, the Secretary-General further requests that the item be allocated to the Fifth Committee.

Unless there is any objection, may I take it that the General Assembly agrees, in view of the importance and urgency of the matter, that the provision of rule 40 of the rules of procedure, which would require a meeting of the General Committee on the question of the inclusion of this item on the agenda, can be waived?

It was so decided.

The President: May I take it that the General Assembly, on the proposal of the Secretary-General, wishes to include an item in the agenda of the current session entitled "Financing of the United Nations Observer Mission in Angola"?

It was so decided.

The President: May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to allocate this item to the Fifth Committee?

It was so decided.

The President: The Chairman of the Fifth Committee will be informed of the decision just taken.

Agenda item 11

Report of the Security Council (A/52/2)

The President: We shall now be discussing the substance of the fifty-second annual report of the Security Council to the General Assembly, covering the period from 16 June 1996 to 15 June 1997 (A/52/2).

It is widely recognized that, by discharging its duties under its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, the Council is playing a special role in implementing the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

97-86341 (E)

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Currently, at this important stage of the reform of the United Nations, the activities of the Security Council are acquiring additional weight and significance. Therefore, I believe that the spirit of transformation should be guiding our considerations.

In this regard a new concept which has found its reflection in the preparation of the present report should be welcomed. Its realization has produced a better picture of the substantive work of the Security Council and introduced an analytical approach to its assessment. The measures at this juncture constitute an important step forward aimed at enhancing the transparency of the Security Council's work.

I would like to encourage delegates to undertake a constructive and action-oriented discussion which would provide additional opportunities for fostering its interaction with the General Assembly.

I now call on the President of the Security Council, Mr. Juan Somavía, to introduce the report of the Security Council.

Mr. Somavía (Chile) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Allow me, Sir, to convey to you personally my pleasure in submitting this report (A/52/2) under your presidency and direction.

It is a great honour for me to continue today the practice established in 1993 by Ambassador Sardenberg of Brazil, and continued by Ambassadors Hannay of the United Kingdom, Al Khussaiby of Oman and Wisnumurti of Indonesia, each of whom addressed you as President of the Security Council to introduce its annual report to the General Assembly.

On each of those occasions, my predecessors indicated the importance the Security Council attaches to the timely submission of its annual report in accordance with Articles 15 and 24 of the Charter of the United Nations, and gave an account of the progress made during the periods covered in relation to the transparency of the work of the Council. Consideration of the Council's report by the General Assembly constitutes an exceptional occasion for the necessary dialogue and interaction between these two principal organs of the United Nations. It is thus an important element enabling both organs to exercise in a complementary manner their respective functions relating to the maintenance of international peace and security.

I would like to express appreciation to the Security Council secretariat for its efforts over the past year in ensuring the availability of the report of the Security Council to all delegations well before the beginning of the general debate. I hope that this practice will continue in the future.

This year's report, which bears the symbol A/52/2 and which covers the period from 16 June 1996 to 15 June 1997, once again reflects the heavy workload of the Council in response to problems relating to the maintenance of international peace and security. As the report indicates, during the period under consideration the Council held 115 formal meetings, adopted 52 resolutions and issued 54 statements by the President. In addition, Council members held consultations of the whole totalling some 342 hours, considered over 105 reports of the Secretary-General and reviewed and processed more than 1,214 documents and communications from States and regional and other intergovernmental organizations.

However, the purpose of my presence here today cannot be merely to transmit data and statistics on the past year's work. The report of the Security Council reflects the efforts which all the members of the Council have made to ensure that the report meets the requirements and aspirations expressed by States Members of the Organization with regard to the working methods of the Council. It is important for all Members of the Organization to build a relationship that will enable each principal organ to discharge properly the mandate assigned to it by the Charter.

During the period under review, the Council's informal working group on documentation and other procedural questions worked hard to find ways of satisfying the wish of Member States to receive in a timely manner a substantive, analytical and material account of the Council's work.

The main outcome of its work, as reviewed and approved by the Council, is embodied in the note by the President of the Security Council circulated as an official document under the symbol S/1997/451 of 12 June 1997. In that note, the President sets out the new measures approved by the Council aimed at making its annual report more analytical in nature, as requested, from 16 June 1997 onwards.

Thus, future reports will include the following as background to each subject dealt with by the Council: a descriptive list of the decisions, resolutions and presidential statements of the Council for the preceding

twelve-month period; a description in chronological order of the consideration by the Council of the matter in question and of actions taken by the Council on that item, including descriptions of the decisions, resolutions and presidential statements; a list of communications received by the Council and reports of the Secretary-General; factual data, including dates of formal meetings and informal consultations at which a given subject was discussed; information regarding the work of the subsidiary organs of the Council, including the sanctions committees; information regarding the documentation and working methods and procedures of the Council; matters brought to the attention of the Council but not discussed by it during the period covered; appendices as in the past, but also the full texts of all resolutions, decisions and presidential statements adopted or voted upon by the Council during the reporting period; and information about meetings with troop-contributing countries. Those are the new elements that will appear in next year's report of the Security Council.

There will also be attached, as an addendum to the report, brief monthly assessments of the work of the Council, which representatives who have completed their functions as President of the Security Council may wish to prepare. Allow me to dwell on this last point. I think it important to stress that the members of the Council discussed at length the best way of giving a more substantive and analytical character to the annual report, which many have, quite rightly, considered as a mere description and compilation of information.

This initial approach adopted by the Council — that of monthly assessments that Presidents may provide at the end of their terms — is an important step in the direction the General Assembly has requested. It is a realistic solution, in that it enables the Council to provide information to the General Assembly through brief assessments prepared by each of the Presidents of the Council, under her or his own responsibility, for the month during which she or he presided. These evaluations will be prepared on a personal basis by each former President, who will consult with the other members of the Council for the purpose of reconciling the approaches that may legitimately exist to the various topics that were the focus of attention in each month.

I think this is an important step towards a more analytical report, and while the outcome of this exercise must not necessarily be considered as representing the views of the Security Council, it will have the virtue of combining the individual sensibilities of each President — which will broaden the view on the work that has been carried out — with consultation with members in order to reflect generally shared perspectives. This is a realistic and at the same time innovative solution which has been applied from July of this year. I believe that with time it may become a rich source of information on the substantive work of the Council.

As indicated in the introduction to the report of the Security Council, the report is not intended as a substitute for the official records of the Security Council, which provide a more substantive account of its deliberations. Thus, the report should be read, for the purposes of this discussion in the General Assembly, in conjunction with other official documents of the Council, to which it constitutes a reference guide.

I would also note that various efforts have been made to make the work of the Council more transparent. This is an area to which great attention will continue to be paid. A number of mechanisms have already been established to improve access by Member States to the work of the Council; our experience shows that, in some cases, effectiveness depends not only on the Council itself but also on participation by non-members of the Council.

Consultations between troop-contributing countries and Council members are a case in point. In general, there is too little active participation by all. I believe that such consultations should generate more interaction between those countries and the Council members. Better use needs to be made of them by all concerned. There can be no doubt that those consultations serve an essential formal purpose, which is that of hearing the views of the countries that place their nationals in situations of danger under the United Nations flag — and this is an extremely important objective — but above all, they are important forums for non-members to contribute their views to the decision-making process of the Council. Therefore, they should be encouraged to use this mechanism more actively than is currently the case, and the Council will continue to explore possible ways and means of enhancing this practice.

I think it is also useful to refer to the presidential briefing sessions on the Council's work, open to the 185 Member States of the United Nations and normally held on the same day as informal consultations of the Council have been held. Nevertheless, few delegations participate or ask questions about the work done. I think that this is another area in which, by working together, we will be

able to make those meetings more useful and broaden their scope.

In conclusion, I wish to draw attention to other changes in the way the Council discharges its responsibilities. For example, when in response to threats to international peace and security, a decision has been taken to impose sanctions, the Council has sought, to the extent possible and in keeping with the goal of ensuring effective implementation, to target those responsible for the actions that brought about the imposition of the sanctions. The Council has also responded to humanitarian concerns by making the fullest possible use of exceptions for humanitarian reasons and has conducted regular monitoring on the basis of Secretariat reports.

In addition, the Council has increasingly and systematically sought to highlight its concern over the situation of humanitarian workers in conflict situations and the responsibility of the international community to protect their lives, property and activities. In cooperation with the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, we have made progress towards finding appropriate formulas for ascertaining their views on the basis of their experience in the field.

Finally, there is no doubt that much still remains to be done in all aspects of the relationship between the General Assembly and the Security Council. It is the responsibility of all of us together — as Members of the United Nations, not as members of one body or the other — to continue the search for working methods that will enable the international community to feel well-served by the interaction of both institutions in the field of peace and security.

Mr. Park (Republic of Korea): My country being a member of the Security Council, my delegation wishes to associate itself with the statement of Ambassador Somavía, who has just introduced the annual report of the Security Council to the General Assembly on behalf of the Council membership.

As we all know, since 1993, when this practice of presenting the Council report to the general membership began, one of the central themes guiding the debate under the current agenda item has been how to promote transparency in the working methods of the Security Council. In our view, there are two main reasons why this question has drawn attention, particularly from non-members of the Council.

First of all, as the Council has played an increasingly important role as an organ responsible for maintaining international peace and security, especially since the end of the cold war, there has been a growing demand outside the Council for information on the Council's actions. Naturally, non-members of the Council have wanted to know in time and in detail what has transpired during informal consultations, which constitute the core of the decision-making process in today's Security Council.

Secondly, non-members of the Council have rightly perceived a deeper and wider transparency of this world body, in particular the Security Council, as an indication that genuine democratization of the Organization is under way. Democratization in the structural dimension is important. In our view, however, democratization of the United Nations cannot be complete without operational democratization, which embraces, among other things, a reasonably fair and equal distribution and the sharing of information among Member States.

Having said that, we believe that over the past year there has been some meaningful progress in the efforts to promote transparency of the Security Council. The new guidelines for the format of the report, contained in the note by the President of the Security Council (S/1997/451), dated 12 June 1997, is a hallmark in this regard.

Drawing upon the principles established by that note, the forthcoming Council report covering the one-year period from 16 June 1997 will be much more user-friendly than the one now before us. The highlight of the future report, however, lies in optional monthly assessments of the work of the Council, to be prepared by the outgoing Presidents under their own responsibility, in consultation with other members of the Council. As rightly pointed out by Ambassador Somavía in his statement, the attachment of this addendum will make the report itself a more substantive and analytical source of information, and thus will contribute to enhancing the Council's transparency.

Some in this Hall may wonder what the report's format has to do with transparency. While the presidency's daily briefing based on informal consultations aims more or less at the real-time transparency of the Council's deliberations, we believe that monthly assessments of the report will contribute to promoting historical transparency. In other words, when a question emerges with regard to past activities of the

Council, those Members outside the Council will be able to refer to the report, rather than spending time contacting a small number of delegations which are able to keep their own record of informal consultations inside the Council.

Over the past year, and especially during our presidency in the month of May, my delegation tried to do its utmost to improve the format of the report to that effect. It was also in this spirit that we provided the general membership with an assessment of the Council's work for the month of May, on our own initiative, even though the new guidelines came into effect on 16 June.

In this vein, my delegation wishes to emphasize that this transparency-enhancing measure was made possible not only by the efforts within the Council, but also by the attention paid by those outside the Council. In particular, the General Assembly's encouragement, contained in its resolution 51/193, has provided the Council with a guidepost pointing to the desirable purpose and content of future reports. Although we do not intend to engage in a legalistic polemic on the relationship between the General Assembly and the Security Council, the six-month process, which was triggered by the General Assembly resolution and eventually led to the adoption of the new guidelines for the Council report, can be regarded, in the view of my delegation, as an example of healthy and positive interaction between the two major pillars of the world body.

While hoping that the ties of closer cooperation and consultation can be further strengthened between these two organs through the continuation of such interactions, we wish to take this opportunity to look at the issue of information-sharing in a broader context, on the basis of our own experience as a Council member. In essence, we believe that the flow of information between the General Assembly and the Security Council should be timely, extensive and two-way, so that both organs can function in a more efficient manner with better knowledge about each other's priorities and preferences.

In our view, there now exist two major channels through which the general membership can receive information from the Council. One channel is the daily briefing by the presidency, based upon informal consultations, and the other is the annual report of the Council. As for the report, even though its new format needs further improvement in order to fully meet the expectations of non-members of the Council, we believe that the progress made over the past year deserves a warm welcome.

On the other hand, it does not seem that the briefing given by the presidency has been playing a substantively meaningful role in terms of information-sharing with the general membership, in particular, when one considers the fact that it is usually not well attended and there are relatively few questions. The format of this briefing may not appeal to most delegations, mainly because it usually takes place hours after informal consultations have ended, or because it is often pre-empted by certain members of the Council who brief the media immediately following informal consultations.

Indeed, whenever I come out of the consultation room and pass by our colleagues, the so-called loungers, waiting to get debriefed by members of the Council, I always feel that, given the critical importance of informal consultations, there should be a more systematic and reliable way of providing information to non-members of the Council on a real-time basis. Although my delegation will leave the Council at the end of this year, we will continue to try to find solutions to this kind of problem, in consultation with other interested delegations.

Regarding the flow of information from the general membership to the Security Council, we wish to emphasize that, without adequate knowledge about the expectations and capabilities of those outside the Council Chamber, the Security Council is unable to deal effectively with a wide spectrum of issues related to the maintenance of peace and security in the post-cold-war era. Especially because various inter-State and intra-State conflicts of this decade are characterized by diverse sources of instability, usually comprising local or regional elements, it seems essential for the Council to familiarize itself with, for instance, the views of neighbouring countries in the area when an issue is brought to its attention. Without this input from the general membership, Council actions might not carry enough weight to lay the necessary foundation for regional peace and security.

Fortunately, in recent years there have been some positive developments in this regard. Expanded use of orientation debates or open debates on certain regional or thematic issues has made a substantial contribution to fostering the Council's awareness of the various characteristics of and challenges posed by the present international security structure. It was with this in mind that my delegation organized an open debate on the subject of protection for humanitarian assistance to refugees and others in conflict situations, on 21 May, during its presidency of the Council, which eventually

resulted in the adoption of a presidential statement on the matter in June under the Russian presidency. Furthermore, there is another concomitant advantage of such a forum, which results from the open nature of the meeting. As this type of Council debate is open to all of the non-members of the Council, real-time transparency is guaranteed, without any hindrance.

Another important mechanism available, at least to part of the general membership, is the arrangement for the consultation and exchange of information with troop-contributing countries, as contained in the presidential statement of 28 March 1996. Although these meetings of troop-contributing countries and Council members have taken place regularly over the past year, we believe that a more dynamic exchange of views, as well as the more active participation of troop-contributors, would make it possible for the Council to be fully informed about the individual sensitivities and preferences of those that join peacekeeping operations before it takes any action on the mandate of peacekeeping operations.

Lastly, let me briefly touch upon the Arria-formula meeting, which is a unique and extremely informal channel of information for the Council. In a nutshell, this is essentially a closed-door meeting of Council members with an invited personality, which is held primarily for the purpose of information-sharing. This month, Council members had another Arria-formula meeting — with Mr. Diego Arria, who, as Ambassador of Venezuela, created this format of meeting in 1993 — in order to learn about its origin and to discuss its effective and desirable use. My impression is that while the informal nature of the Arria-formula meeting is certainly an asset which facilitates a candid exchange of views, it may also be possible to hold the meeting in a more flexible or more open setting under certain circumstances, with a view to enhancing the transparency of the Council. In this context, we wish to draw the attention of the Assembly to rule 39 of the provisional rules of procedure of the Council, which stipulates that the Council may invite members of the Secretariat or other persons to supply it with information, and to Article 32 of the Charter, which entitles non-members of the Council to participate in the discussion of a dispute under consideration by the Council.

However, my delegation has no intention of claiming at this time that all future Arria-formula meetings should be held in the form of formal meetings of the Council in accordance with the aforementioned rules. Rather, we expect that the Council's working group on documentation and other procedural matters, which has recently taken up this issue, will be able to forge a balanced formula to allow both informality and transparency.

All those mechanisms between the General Assembly and the Security Council, which I have just delineated, amply demonstrate how difficult and sensitive it is to pursue transparency and efficiency at the same time. In principle, however, we firmly believe that an enhanced partnership between the two organs should encompass both elements, so that the calibre of this world body as a whole can be augmented in coping with the broad range of new conflicts and instabilities which have emerged in the post-cold-war era.

Indeed, contradictory as the two concepts may seem, transparency and efficiency do complement each other. In this age of information, it goes without saying that the efficiency of any organization depends, to a large extent, upon how adequately information is shared internally. The degree of information- sharing, in turn, relies heavily upon the extent of transparency within the organization. In this regard, we are convinced that efficiency and transparency can, and should, be pursued in tandem within the United Nations as well.

From this perspective, it is essential, in our view, to secure a more orderly and reliable flow of information in both directions between the two major organs of this world body. While keeping this objective in mind, my delegation has made strenuous efforts to further strengthen and institutionalize the links between the General Assembly and the Security Council throughout the past two years as a Council member, and will continue to do so, starting next year, outside the Council as well.

Sir John Weston (United Kingdom): I welcome this opportunity to consider the annual report of the Security Council to the General Assembly. The Permanent Representative of Chile, Ambassador Somavía, this month's President of the Security Council, has already spoken on behalf of members of the Council in introducing the report. This debate provides a useful occasion to consider the manner in which the Council carries out its Charter responsibilities for the maintenance of international peace and security and the way in which it keeps the wider membership informed of its activities.

During the period covered by the report — June 1996 to June 1997 — the Council continued to be faced with a challenging, often heavy agenda. There was some good news: slow, but steady progress in the

implementation of the Dayton peace settlement in Bosnia, and signs of hope that the indicted war criminals in that country would be brought to justice; and renewed hope of lasting peace in Liberia and Tajikistan — two countries whose plight has occupied the Council's attention for much of this decade. But, elsewhere, the news has been grim. The Middle East peace process is stumbling. War continued to ravage Afghanistan. And Africa, which continues to dominate the work of the Council, saw further tragedies: the brutal *coup d'état* against the democratic Government in Sierra Leone, and the humanitarian suffering in the region of the Great Lakes. Perhaps, in retrospect, the Council was too slow or timid in its reactions to some of these challenges. All too often it lacked clear, timely and well-analysed information on the crises, so many of which were fast-moving and confused intra-State conflicts.

The British delegation attaches great importance to ensuring the greatest possible transparency to the Council's actions. I made a particular point of this during our presidency of the Security Council in August. I hope you will have received the assessment of the work of the Council during that month which I prepared following consultations with my colleagues on the Council, and which I have sent to all permanent representatives. I hope that this new means of enhancing Council transparency will become a regular practice. It is one of a number of welcome innovations to the form and content of the Council's future reports to the Assembly which were agreed in June this year.

All Members of the Organization need to make best use of the series of changes which the Council has introduced to its working methods over the last few years. That process of organic evolutionary change has been most welcome. I was therefore surprised to see, when Council President in August, that so few non-members of the Council attend the daily briefings given by the Council President or participate actively in the consultations between Council members and troop contributors which the Council President chairs. Like Ambassador Somavía before me, I hope we can work together to remedy that situation.

This debate is an important occasion for interaction between two of the principal organs of the Organization. The British delegation will be listening carefully to the views expressed today, both on the substance of the Council's work, and on the manner in which it conducts its business. And you may rest assured that we will continue to strive over the next year to ensure that the Council lives up to its responsibilities under the Charter to take swift and decisive action to maintain international peace and security, and to ensure that the United Nations is equipped with the necessary capacity for preventive action and peace support operations.

Mr. Sucharipa (Austria): Austria, like other delegations, welcomes the introduction of the report of the Security Council by its current President, the Permanent Representative of Chile, earlier in the meeting. We understand this presentation, like similar presentations by the respective Presidents of the Security Council in earlier years, to be an expression of the readiness of the Council to engage in a dialogue on the discharge of its mandate pursuant to Article 24 of the Charter with the General Assembly. This practice, initiated four years ago by the Permanent Representative of Brazil, Ambassador Sardenberg, adds to the ongoing enhancement of the relationship between the General Assembly and the Security Council, bearing in mind the responsibility of the latter to act on behalf of the whole membership.

The newly experienced efficiency of the Security Council after the end of the cold war had a direct impact on the interest of the general membership in the Council's work. Owing, *inter alia*, to the increase in the number of binding decisions adopted by the Security Council, the General Assembly intensified its call for involvement in the decision-making process of the Council, and for improved interaction with, and transparency of, the proceedings of the Council. My delegation welcomes the important steps taken by the Security Council over the past few years with a view to responding to the General Assembly's request, and we are pleased to note the Council's intention to continue to consider and to review ways to improve the Council's documentation and procedure.

An adequate flow of information towards non-members is a necessary prerequisite to understand and assess how the Council is dealing with political issues and should therefore be facilitated as much as possible. In our view the presidency of the Security Council should play a crucial role in keeping the general membership fully informed on the deliberations of the Council. The presidency's monthly forecast should be complemented by an exhaustive announcement of the items to be dealt with by the Council in the daily *Journal of the United Nations* as well as by daily briefings on the Council's work as announced in the *Journal*. The outgoing presidency should wind up its work by presenting an analytical report on the Council's deliberations conducted

and decisions taken under its leadership. The overall information thus offered by the presidency of the Council should be of a quality suitable to satisfy the average demand for information by delegations.

While the monthly forecast in its current form constitutes, indeed, a useful tool for the daily work of delegations, the briefings offered by the respective presidencies could in our view be improved. Although some presidencies give a rather detailed survey of the Council's deliberations, others limit themselves to the enumeration of agenda items. A continuous high standard of information could help to meet the General Assembly's demand for more transparency and would lead to increased interest of delegations in attending these briefings. But I also agree with remarks made earlier by Ambassador Somavía and Sir John Weston that these briefings should be more interactive. This also applies to the troop contributor meetings.

My delegation is pleased to note that the Security Council members have reviewed the format of the annual report, and that as of next year it will be changed, taking into account views expressed on the existing format. In the past, my delegation, like others, has made suggestions in this regard, including the possibility of monthly reports, which would then be put together to form part of the yearly report of the Security Council. We are pleased to find this concept of monthly reports reflected in this year's report in the section on "Security Council working methods and procedure" (A/52/2, chap. 28 B), and we are looking forward to seeing that implemented.

In order to add to the understanding of the Council's decision-making, the monthly report should mainly consist of a detailed and, as far as possible, frank analysis of the Council's deliberations, including a description of diverging opinions and negotiated compromises. The report should be established under the responsibility of the outgoing presidency, without the requirement of formal approval by the Council members. In order to be useful for delegations, we believe it should be circulated in due course, possibly during the first half of the following presidency.

My delegation would, of course, like to take this opportunity to express its appreciation to those delegations that have already prepared such reports upon completion of their respective presidencies.

Regular analytical reports on the work of the Security Council will not only contribute to the transparency of the Council's work but also to the promotion of the interaction between the Council and the General Assembly.

As much as the Security Council needs to be transparent for non-members, it also needs to be open for incoming information. During the period under consideration, the Council continued to make use of informal mechanisms with a view to gathering important information from different sources with special knowledge on a given situation. This formula seems especially useful since it allows the Council to canvass a wide range of views in order to form its decision-making and to help further to clarify different aspects covered by its work. We therefore encourage the Council to continue this ad hoc practice in a pragmatic manner.

Member States with a special interest in a specific item should have increased opportunities to articulate their views at an early stage of the Council's consideration. This kind of participation is especially important for countries which are concerned or affected by a given conflict or which, because of their geographic location, would assume a particular role in the ensuing operations mandated or authorized by the Security Council. Here again, we welcome the progress made over recent years and we hope that this trend will continue. A substantial dialogue is of particular importance in the framework of peacekeeping operations. Here, the current mechanism for interaction between the Council, the Secretariat and the troop contributors could, in our view, be further strengthened. However, I repeat that to my mind this also requires increased efforts on the part of the troop-contributing countries.

The relationship between the Council and the General Assembly is undoubtedly a central issue of the ongoing reform debate, which is essentially motivated by the call for more legitimacy for the Council. We are convinced that a high degree of transparency and close interaction among delegations will contribute to fostering this legitimacy, and should therefore be the guiding principles for the future activities of the Council.

Mr. Eliasson (Sweden): I welcome this opportunity for the General Assembly to review the past year's work of the Security Council and to consider its future direction. I thank my friend and colleague, Juan Somavía, for his thoughtful and incisive introduction of the annual report of the Council. I also want to express how happy I am to speak under the chairmanship of the President, whom we all remember as a very effective Ambassador of Ukraine here for some time and, of

course, at present the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine.

Many of the matters dealt with in the report are complex and serious. The Security Council has had its successes but, let us admit, also its setbacks. And its agenda is constantly growing. The Security Council of today deals with the vast majority of ongoing conflicts in all parts of the world. From Sweden's perspective, it is important to emphasize that the Council's responsibility is global: no region or country can be excluded.

The Security Council always has the right — and I would say the duty — to take the necessary action when international peace and security are threatened. It is legitimate for the Council to be concerned when great numbers of innocent civilians are killed, when gross violations of human rights occur or when democratically elected leaders are overthrown by violent means. Such developments increasingly threaten regional peace and affect international security. If they are not dealt with at an early stage, disastrous conflagration is often the result.

It is a source of great concern, and in my view unacceptable, that Security Council resolutions are so often defied by those to whom they are primarily directed: a small number of States flouting the fundamentals of international law, and ruthless parties to domestic conflicts bent on securing victory on the battlefield.

Based on Sweden's experiences from this year's Council membership, I would like to emphasize some important requirements for a more effective Security Council: first, early warning and early information which could lead to early action; secondly, action, according to need, throughout the spectrum of conflict resolution, from early warning to Chapter VII measures; thirdly, closer cooperation with regional organizations based on clear principles; and, fourthly and lastly, stronger interaction with United Nations Members outside the Council.

I want to emphasize that these four points should be concerns not only for the Security Council but for the whole of the United Nations. The success or failure of Security Council action is in the hands of all of us and, indeed, affects all of us. Effective conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peace-building must, indeed, involve the United Nations system as a whole.

As to my first point, the Security Council must be able to take early action based on early warning and information, preferably already at the preventive stage. Lessons should be learned from current cases such as the former Zaire and the Republic of the Congo. And the preventive mission in Macedonia may soon be pronounced a success, but it has yet to set a precedent. The Security Council must be politically prepared to consider preventive measures at different levels, at short notice, on a case-by-case basis.

The possibilities of conflict prevention could also be considered from a regional or subregional perspective. The situation in large parts of Africa today is worrying, with a growing belt of conflicts stretching from the South Atlantic to the Red Sea. There is here an increasing need for a trustful and constructive relationship between the United Nations, particularly the Security Council, and regional actors.

Conflict prevention is admittedly a difficult subject for the Security Council. Respect for sovereignty is of course a fundamental principle in the work of the United Nations, but affected countries all too often try at any price to avoid what they perceive as outside interference. Regional organizations and important neighbours often take a similar approach. Council members are cautious — often too cautious. As we have seen, missed opportunities come at a high price, mainly to those directly concerned in the end.

Strengthening the United Nations capability in conflict prevention remains a priority for Sweden, as a member of the Security Council. To this should be added the development of a new generation of peacekeeping operations and measures to improve openness and broad consultations in the work of the Council. These, indeed, were three main features of Sweden's policy when elected to the Council, with your support, a year ago.

As to my second point, it is fundamental that the Security Council be able to decide on actions throughout the spectrum of conflict resolution. You can visualize a kind of ladder of preventive measures which we should use, from early warning, prevention, political persuasion, mediation and other Chapter VI instruments, to peacekeeping and, if need be, Chapter VII action.

Here, I would like to commend Ambassador Somavía for his observations on the need for humanitarian exceptions to sanctions regimes. It is important to the credibility of the United Nations on Chapter VII action that vulnerable groups not pay the price for their leaders, who are the real and legitimate objects of sanctions. When conditions merit the

establishment of new peacekeeping operations, all Council members must quickly be ready to take the decisions required according to this ladder of prevention and action.

Multinational forces may in some acute situations be the best option for international action. It is vital that such deployment take place with the endorsement of the United Nations. And we should be aware of the risk of overuse of multinational forces at the expense of United Nations peacekeeping.

Member States which turn to the United Nations when their security is threatened legitimately expect to be heard and helped without delay. The Security Council, I stress again, must show its willingness and ability to respond to such requests from Member States in all parts of the world. The credibility of the United Nations will suffer if multinational forces become a substitute for direct United Nations action due to lack of funds or unrelated considerations.

Thirdly, the role of regional organizations in the work of the Council is growing in importance. This is welcome — but more could be done. In the Balkans, the actions of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the European Union and others continue to prove essential for peace and stability. In other parts of the world, regional organizations also play a positive role in conflict prevention and resolution.

Yet the Security Council can never abdicate its primary responsibility for international peace and security. It must defend fundamental principles of international law. When regional peace efforts cannot produce results, or when regional action has become a part of the problem and, sadly, not of the solution, the Security Council must insist on assuming its primary role.

Lastly, stronger interaction with non-Council members must be a priority. The Security Council has gone a long way towards increasing openness and broadening consultations with non-members, particularly troop contributors. Again, much still needs to be done, and of course an active interest on the part of the non-Council member States is essential, as Ambassador Somavía and Ambassador Weston have underlined. The Council should, for example, follow the proposals made for more frequent orientation debates and for including affected non-members in its discussions, as provided for by Article 31 of the Charter.

Openness is essential as such, but in particular as a means towards interaction. Non-Council members should do their part by using the opportunities for substantive discussions, at meetings with troop-contributing countries, for example. And all United Nations Member States have a role to play, we should always remember, in ensuring compliance with Security Council decisions.

The format of Security Council reports has been subject to much criticism. The Council has now decided on some improvements, notably the introduction of monthly presidential assessments. Here, I would like to thank Ambassador Sucharipa for his comments about those reports that have been issued this year.

But Security Council reports — annual or special — can at best be instruments. They should help ensure that the work of the Security Council and the General Assembly is mutually reinforcing. They should remind both bodies of the United Nations that they have different responsibilities, but also share the same constituency and, indeed, the same vocation, namely, to build peace and security for all.

Mr. Ople (Philippines): We thank both the Security Council for the timely submission of its annual report to the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council, the Permanent Representative of Chile, for his presentation of the report. We also appreciate the efforts of the Council to improve the content of the report and the measures it has taken in this regard, as stated in section B of chapter 28 in part II of the report. We look forward in particular to receiving the addendum mentioned in paragraph 5 of the note contained in section B, consisting of brief assessments on the work of the Security Council by representatives who have served as President of the Security Council.

We believe these efforts to improve the report are a continuation of the positive changes that have occurred in recent years to improve the work and documentation of the Council. These changes have not gone unrecognized, and we encourage the Council to enhance its efforts further in this regard.

Nevertheless, and despite the efforts to improve the report, we are disappointed that, once again, the report fails to measure up substantively to what the General Assembly called for in resolution 51/193, particularly with respect to the improvements suggested in operative paragraph 4 of that resolution. These improvements include the need for the provision of substantial

information on the work and recommendations of the Council's subsidiary bodies such as the sanctions committees, on the informal consultations of the whole undertaken prior to action by the Council on substantive issues, and on requests received under Article 50 of the Charter and actions taken by the Council thereon.

As called for in the same paragraph, a section highlighting the extent to which resolutions of the General Assembly on issues falling within the scope of both organs have been taken into account by the Council would also be a very useful addition to the report. A section of this nature would provide a good basis for assessing and analysing the Council's work, and for considering ways to improve the interaction between the Assembly and the Council.

The Philippine delegation believes the content of the present report, which remains essentially a compilation of official proceedings and decisions, continues to make it difficult for the General Assembly to undertake a truly substantive and in-depth consideration and analysis of the actions of the Council, as well as its subsidiary bodies. We therefore urge and encourage the Council to consider and implement the various recommendations to improve its report contained in resolution 51/193.

An analytical and substantive annual report would also facilitate implementation of the decision in General Assembly resolution 51/241, calling upon the President of the General Assembly, based on his assessment of the debate on the report, to arrange informal consultations to discuss the need and content of any action by the Assembly on matters arising from the debate on the report. A report in line with that envisioned by resolution 51/193 would, in our view, encourage a more substantive debate and thus enhance the President's ability to determine the nature and output of these informal consultations. We further believe that holding such consultations on a regular basis would contribute to a more detailed examination of the report and lead to a more productive and interactive relationship between the two organs, as well as help revitalize the Assembly's role in addressing issues affecting international peace and security.

We therefore urge the President to take this decision into account and, notwithstanding the observations we have made on the contents of the present report, to consider arranging for such consultations at an appropriate time during this session. The President may wish to consider the scope and particular matters which could be discussed in the informal consultations. For this reason, we believe that this agenda item should be kept open throughout the year, as decided by the General Assembly in resolution 51/241.

The submission of special reports by the Security Council to the General Assembly, during the course of each session, in accordance with Articles 15 and 24 of the Charter and as encouraged in paragraph 5 of resolution 51/193, would also be a major vehicle for ensuring continuous and up-to-date information on the Security Council's decisions and activities. In this regard, my delegation suggests that special reports be issued on major Council actions and/or situations affecting international peace and security that occur in the period between the submission of the annual reports. These actions would include the establishment or termination of peacekeeping or other operations or substantive changes in their mandates. Decisions by the Council to impose or lift sanctions on any Member State of the United Nations or to change existing sanctions regimes should also be occasions for issuing a special report.

The need for a more substantive Security Council report is an essential element of the broader efforts to reform the Council's working methods in order to achieve greater transparency in its work and secure more effective participation of non-members in its decision-making process. The Philippines, along with the other members of the Non-Aligned Movement, has over the past few years been actively supporting specific reforms towards this end, particularly in the discussions of the Open-Ended Working Group on the reform of the Security Council. We shall continue to do so.

In addition to a more substantive report to the General Assembly, these desired reforms include more effective consultations with troop-contributing countries, measures to allow participation of non-members in the Council's informal consultations of the whole, through the application of Articles 31 and 32 of the Charter; the holding of open public meetings in lieu of informal consultations of the whole; more frequent consultations and meetings between the Presidents of the General Assembly and the Security Council; and clearer procedures for requesting meetings of the Council in accordance with Article 35 of the Charter. It is also necessary to curtail and rationalize the use of the veto. In this regard, we support the position of the Non-Aligned Movement that the veto power should apply only to actions taken under Chapter VII of the Charter.

We believe that if such measures could be adopted, in addition to those related to improving the report, the

United Nations would truly be strengthened and the principles of democracy and sovereign equality of States fully observed.

Mr. Hasmy Agam (Malaysia): I would like to express my deep appreciation to the President of the Security Council, Ambassador Somavía of Chile, for introducing the report of the Security Council to the General Assembly. My delegation is particularly grateful to him for his oral presentation, which was an important introduction and supplement to the report.

The debate on the report of the Security Council will provide an opportunity for the other 170 Members of the Organization that are not members of the Council to be fully informed and to discuss the work of the Council over the past year. The debate is meant to be not a ritual and a mere formality, but an opportunity for the Security Council, as the primary organ of the United Nations tasked with the maintenance of international peace and security, to apprise the Member States of the United Nations of its decisions and actions. The debate also provides an opportunity for Member States to make certain pronouncements on the actions of the Council as they pertain to international peace and security.

My delegation, along with other Member States, made a number of pertinent observations and suggestions last year on both the format and the substance of the Council's reports. Unfortunately, the report continues to remain largely a compendium of presidential statements and Council resolutions and a compilation of communications and documentation received by the Council during the course of the year. Reading through this compendium, a State that is not a member of the Council would have difficulty in following the work of the Council and particularly in fully comprehending the decisions arrived at by the Council. "As a guide to the activities of the Security Council during the period covered" (A/52/2, introduction, second paragraph), it would have been most helpful to non-members if the report had been more analytical. It would have been particularly useful if the report had contained a brief and objective assessment of the work of the Council during the period under review, covering both success or lack of success in respect of the issues handled by the Council. My delegation notes with interest some innovative approaches that will be incorporated in future reports of the Council, as indicated by the President of the Council in his oral submission this morning. We look forward to reading and scrutinizing these future reports. In the meantime, our comments will be based on the report in its present form.

Given the growing trend of the increased democratization of the United Nations, there is a need for greater transparency in the work of the Security Council, which, unfortunately, remains the least democratic of United Nations institutions. While the practice of closed meetings of the Council cannot be discarded, and may be necessary to enable members of the Council to facilitate decision-making on sensitive issues, the general membership of the Organization also needs — and expects — to be informed of the substance or thrust of those closed consultations. There have been several suggestions made to achieve increased transparency in the work of the Council, such as the publication of summary records of the Council's closed consultations. Such summary records would supplement the annual report of the Council in its present format and redress its many inherent shortcomings. There is also merit to the proposal that a Security Council bulletin, to be published on a monthly basis, should include references to the positions of members of the Council on actions taken by it. There have also been suggestions to publish quarterly reports, which would increase transparency and strengthen the free flow of information between the Security Council and the General Assembly. Any one of these proposals deserves serious consideration. More important, there should be more frequent formal meetings of the Council, which would allow non-members to express their views on the various important issues being addressed by the Council before decisions are taken on them. Formal meetings of the Council would be a clear manifestation of the institutional linkage between the Council and the larger membership of the Organization, which should be further strengthened.

Non-members should also benefit from special briefings given by the Special Representatives and Envoys of the Secretary-General on issues before the Council. Those briefings would update non-members of the Council on the latest developments on issues of importance and concern to the international community.

My delegation welcomes the regular briefings given by the President of the Council to non-members. Unfortunately, very often little information is given during these briefings beyond what is given to the representatives of the press corps, and this really explains the general lack of interest shown by Member States in the briefings. While there is every reason for the President or his representative to be prudent in the briefings, he or she should be encouraged to be a little more forthcoming in responding to questions posed by Member States than he or she would be to questions

posed by the press corps. At the same time, it would be helpful to Member States if these briefings were given immediately following the consultations of the Council rather than some two or three hours later and usually after the briefing of the press, as is currently the practice. My delegation, however, welcomes the monthly assessment by the President of the Council, which has been helpful in giving an insight into the Council's work during that particular month. We hope that this practice will continue and be formalized.

While the Secretariat and other organs of the United Nations are undergoing reforms with a view to enhancing the Organization's effectiveness and efficiency, so too must the Security Council. The discussions that have taken place in the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council have generated many concrete ideas and proposals pertaining to both the decision-making process, or methodologies, of the Council and its structure. All of these would contribute to making the Council more effective and efficient. They would also make it more transparent, representational and democratic, in spite of its inherent limitations. My delegation therefore looks forward to the early conclusion of these deliberations so as to enable the reform of the Council to move ahead without undue delay. The reform measures, once agreed and implemented, would also serve to further enhance the Council's standing and legitimacy in the eyes of the international community.

My delegation is particularly concerned about one important aspect of the work of the Council: the imposition of sanctions on Member States. We regret that sanctions have of late been used, or have been perceived to be used, as a tool in the furtherance of narrow national interests of some of the Council's members, to serve specific political objectives or agendas. Such use or perception of use of sanctions does not contribute to enhancing the image or prestige of the Council. Sanctions, which are imposed on behalf of Member States, have often brought untold misery and hardship to an unintended target — the helpless populace, particularly children, nursing mothers and the infirm and aged. Here my delegation welcomes the important comments made by the President of the Council in respect to the humanitarian aspects of sanctions. My delegation has always believed that sanctions should be an instrument of last resort and should be applied only after other measures have failed. At the same time, when they are applied sanctions should have clear and specific objectives and parameters and be subject to regular reviews and evaluations by the Council. In this regard, my delegation had in the past called for a separate chapter in the report to comprehensively reflect the activities and decisions of the sanctions committee, a matter which, regrettably, continues to be treated in a superficial fashion.

The establishment of an institutionalized system of consultations between Security Council members and troop-contributing countries has contributed to increased coordination in peacekeeping operations. This practice should be continued and further institutionalized. On a related matter, Malaysia, as a troop contributor, is increasingly concerned that the continuing financial crisis faced by the Organization has resulted in the subsidizing of a sizeable portion of the costs of peacekeeping operations by the troop-contributing countries, many of which, like Malaysia, are developing countries. In this regard, my delegation would once again urge all Member States to pay their peacekeeping contributions on time, in full and without conditions. The United Nations should not be put in a position of not being able to reimburse troop-contributing countries on time. Such a situation will only discourage the developing countries from coming forward to contribute their troops for peacekeeping operations. On a positive note, Malaysia is gratified that the question of equitable compensation to those men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice in the service of the United Nations has now been satisfactorily settled on the basis of just and equitable principles.

Mr. Ayewah (Nigeria): Let me begin by thanking the President of the Security Council, the Representative of Chile, for his introduction of the annual report of the Council covering the period 16 June 1996 to 15 June 1997, contained in document A/52/2.

The presentation of the report of the Security Council to the General Assembly is important and serves a number of purposes. First, it helps to enhance and strengthen the cooperative relationship that should exist between the Security Council and the General Assembly. Secondly, it affords the General Assembly the opportunity to further inform itself about the activities of the Security Council and to make inputs and recommendations that, hopefully, will influence the future direction of its work. Thirdly, it underscores the importance of accountability. After all, the Security Council acts on behalf of the entire membership of the United Nations. By reporting to the General Assembly, the Council assures itself of the support of the Assembly

members for the activities and decisions it has taken on their behalf.

Since the establishment by the Security Council, in June 1993, of an informal working group on documentation and other procedural matters, and partly as a result of the work of the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform, a series of steps has been taken by the Council to provide for greater transparency, and increased interaction and consultation between Council members and non-members. All these have made a salutary contribution to the credibility of the Security Council, but they still fall short of the desired transparency which most United Nations Member States expect from the Council. Closed-door consultations continue to be the Council's preferred approach. Besides, most of the improvements that have been proposed for the working methods of the Council have not yet been institutionalized.

In this regard, we note the emerging consensus in the General Assembly's Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform about Cluster-II-related issues. We, however, wish to underscore once again that no reform of the Council will be complete without an expansion on an equitable geographical basis of the Council's membership in both categories. We shall, of course, have more to say on this issue under the proper agenda item.

As for the report itself, we note the improvements that have been agreed upon by Council members aimed at enhancing its analytical nature. I am referring to measures approved by the Council, as listed in its President's note of 12 June 1997, document S/1997/451. These include the attachment, as an addendum to the report, of brief assessments on the work of the Council which representatives who have completed their functions as President of the Security Council prepare on their own responsibility and in consultation with Council members. The circulation of such assessments by some past Presidents is both responsive and instructive.

Nonetheless — and we must continue to draw attention to this — the report basically remains a compilation of the various communications received by the Council and of the decisions adopted by it during the reporting period. We believe the report should provide an analysis of the activities of the Security Council, the decisions that have been taken, and how far those decisions have evolved over time, particularly during the implementation phase.

It would be very useful to know whether a particular decision has helped to move the process forward towards the resolution of the problem and what lessons, if any, could be learned. Although this would involve a lot more work and the use of increased resources, we believe that it is the only way to have a user-friendly report on the Council's activities.

The workload of the Council in the discharge of its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security continues to be heavy. It has increased not only in volume, but in scope. Although the statistics for this reporting period in terms of the number of formal meetings, resolutions, presidential statements and hours of consultations show a decline compared to the high volume of two to three years ago, it is still a heavy responsibility and a reflection of the changed international political environment.

Similarly, although there has been a decrease in the number of United Nations peacekeeping operations and troop levels in comparison with the state of play two to three years ago, one must admit that these operations continue to be a major undertaking of the United Nations, accounting for a greater percentage of United Nations resources and expenditure. A majority of the peacekeeping operations currently being undertaken by the United Nations are located in developing countries, particularly in Africa. Efforts to find solutions to some of these conflicts have become the responsibility of regional or subregional organizations acting in concert among themselves and in pursuit of the provisions of the United Nations Charter.

In some cases, the United Nations has continued to play a complementary role. In the West African subregion, for example, the solution of the Liberian conflict benefited from a cooperative relationship between the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the United Nations, including the co-deployment of personnel on the ground. Although it took a while before the Security Council became actively engaged in the resolution of the Liberian conflict, its involvement and that of other members of the international community at some crucial stages of the process proved very helpful and useful.

Following the overthrow of the democratically elected Government of President Kabbah of Sierra Leone on 25 May 1997, the ECOWAS leaders have again seized the initiative to resolve the situation. At the ECOWAS summit meeting in August 1997, they decided to impose

sanctions and an embargo on the junta. The import of these measures was subsequently endorsed by the Security Council in its resolution 1132 (1997) of 8 October 1997. With this combination of measures, the ECOWAS Committee of Five has now achieved a major breakthrough in its dialogue with the junta. We hope that the six-month peace plan for the restoration of constitutional order and the reinstatement of the Government of President Kabbah will be faithfully complied with by the junta. And for this to happen, the continuing support of the Security Council, including through the maintenance of the sanctions and the deployment of military observers, will be necessary.

However, there are some crisis situations in Africa which have not received the full attention of the Security Council. A case that readily comes to mind in this regard is the situation in the Republic of the Congo. At the outset of the crisis, many African countries indicated their readiness to make troops available to an inter-African force to help stabilize the situation. Their expectation was that the United Nations or the international community would finance their participation. This never materialized. The crisis in that country has resulted in the displacement of over two thirds of the residents of Brazzaville and the extensive destruction of the city's infrastructure. The crisis has been further complicated by the involvement of external forces. We can only hope that these forces will pursue the logic of peace rather than their economic, political or strategic interests.

In concluding, we would like to underscore the continuing primacy of the responsibility of the United Nations in the promotion of international peace and security. International peace and security are indivisible. This is the essence of collective security. We therefore hope that the Council will, even at this late stage, get itself properly seized of the situation in the Congo with a view to the restoration of normalcy in that part of the world.

Finally, my delegation would like to thank the Secretariat for the efforts that have gone into the preparation of this report. We are aware that a lot of time and resources have gone into its production.

Mr. Tello (Mexico) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The General Assembly has before it the report of the Security Council for the period June 1996-June 1997. Continuing the sound practice begun by Brazil, the report was introduced to us today by the Security Council President, Ambassador Juan Somavía of Chile.

Mexico attaches special importance to the obligation of the Security Council under Article 24 of the Charter to submit annual reports on its work to the General Assembly. The Member States, which have conferred upon the Council the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, must be apprised of the activities undertaken by that organ on their behalf.

That is why it is a source of particular satisfaction to note that, in recent years, the members of the Security Council have made commendable efforts earnestly to fulfil this duty. We seem to have moved beyond the time when that provision of the Charter was considered to be a mere bureaucratic procedure, devoid of substance.

The document before us today has the same basic structure as last year's report. We welcome the continued desire for openness, which allows relations between the Council and the General Assembly faithfully to reflect the spirit of balance sought by the authors of the Charter. Communication between the two organs must be fluid and constant. It is appropriate to reiterate that the Security Council acts not on its own authority, but on behalf of us all. We are all affected by its decisions. Its activities are of interest to us all.

The report also announces that, as of 1997, the healthy trend of enhancing the analytical nature of the description of the Council's tasks will be strengthened. We appreciate the assessments that have been prepared by the successive Presidents of the Council in recent months. These documents are useful instruments in helping us to understand better what is happening. We welcome this initiative, which could not be included officially in the current report because it was adopted outside the period covered by the document.

We urge future Presidents of the Council to continue this practice. We assure them that we appreciate their efforts to keep us informed, which benefits both the Council and the General Assembly.

The first part of the report details the many items the Council considered as it discharged its responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. The long list of conflicts and situations of tension shows that, despite the hopes aroused by the end of the cold war, there are lingering and new situations that threaten peace and security everywhere in the world.

We note with concern that the Security Council has often had to intervene in internal situations — situations that were not envisioned by the authors of the Charter. The clear line that should separate international action from national jurisdiction has been blurring. We are witnessing a new scenario whose limits have not yet been defined. Practice has been transcending law.

Mexico insists that it is critical to act cautiously. The Security Council must not use an elastic interpretation of Chapter VII of the Charter to become an organ with limitless powers. The maintenance of peace cannot justify the indiscriminate imposition of exceptional measures not only upon States, as foreseen in the Charter, but also upon entities not contemplated in the Charter, such as individuals and internal factions — which, as we all know, has happened recently. Abuse of Chapter VII weakens the United Nations.

Among the issues before the Security Council, one, for obvious reasons, is of great importance to Mexico: Guatemala. The Council operation in that neighbouring country shows that success is achieved when the principles governing peacekeeping operations are strictly respected. United Nations intervention in Guatemala could well serve as an exemplar for other missions. The Security Council did not try to supplant the will of the parties to the long-standing Guatemalan conflict. It was those parties who, with patience and dedication, resolved their differences at the negotiating table and signed a peace agreement. It was they who requested a United Nations presence to monitor the implementation of what had been agreed. The Security Council acceded to that formal request by the Government of Guatemala and sent the small military mission needed to supervise the ceasefire and the demobilization. The operation had a defined mandate and it carried out its tasks in full and on schedule.

These events prove the importance of acting in accordance with principles. With political will, clarity of purpose and unified resolve, the desired results will be obtained.

We welcome the initiative taken in September — outside the present reporting period — to hold a meeting to consider the persistent problems afflicting the African continent. We hope that its results will help Africa at last to achieve the peace, stability and prosperity its peoples deserve. We believe that the report to be submitted by the Secretary-General, with specific recommendations for preventing and resolving conflicts there, will help lay the groundwork for peace and sustainable economic development as a support for African efforts to build a future of peace, democracy and justice.

The Security Council reports on growing cooperation from regional organizations in the maintenance of peace. Here my delegation stresses that the activities of regional organizations in this sphere must fall within the framework of Chapter VIII of the Charter and must strictly respect the functions and areas of competence defined in their respective founding statutes.

The report of the Security Council before us today is quite different from the sterile document to which we had become accustomed, and we reiterate how much this pleases us. The Council has begun to heed the appeals of the General Assembly, among which we highlight resolution 51/193, adopted last year on the initiative of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. Mexico voted in favour of that resolution to demonstrate anew its commitment to the openness and transparency that should characterize the work of the Security Council. We welcome this trend, and hope that it will be strengthened with the support of the members of the Council, and especially that of its five permanent members.

Mr. Fulci (Italy): First of all, let me congratulate the President of the Security Council, the Permanent Representative of Chile, Ambassador Juan Somavía, for his very clear and comprehensive presentation of the Council's annual report to the General Assembly. My compliments go also to the Secretariat for its excellent preparatory work.

There is little need to stress the importance of the subject of today's discussion. What the United Nations Charter requires is close and effective coordination between the Security Council and the General Assembly, consistent with the respective responsibilities of those two principal organs. The Security Council's report to the General Assembly is therefore an essential tool for ensuring such coordination. Article 15 of the Charter sets out in its first paragraph the legal framework for the Assembly's consideration of the report, focused on the measures decided upon or taken by the Council to maintain international peace and security.

Previous and current debates in the General Assembly and other forums, such as the Working Group on Security Council reform, have underlined the need for a meaningful debate on the Council's report, as well as for greater transparency in the Council's work and greater accessibility to non-members of the Council. My

country, Italy, has constantly been and will continue to be strongly in favour of pursuing these goals.

In particular, we must remain extremely vigilant to increase — and not to reduce or undermine in any way or form — the fundamental role of the General Assembly as the major pillar of the United Nations. We should not allow it; we should not allow a decrease in the leverage of the General Assembly vis-à-vis other organs of the United Nations, particularly the Security Council. Reforms should take into account everyone's views and be the result of intense consultations, carried out in a true democratic spirit and with equal involvement of all — I stress "all" — United Nations Member States. The outcome should not be such as to benefit the very few at the expense of the great many — and, I should add, at the expense of the General Assembly.

As Ambassador Somavía pointed out, this year's report shows that the Council has continued its intense activity in the maintenance of international peace and security and related humanitarian aspects. The number of meetings and informal consultations held, and decisions taken, demonstrate the Council's commitment and dedication in responding to the demands of today's international community.

In particular, I would like to highlight the extraordinary speed and efficiency with which the Council acted at the request of Albania and Italy to authorize the multinational peace operation in Albania. The actual decision of the Security Council came in a matter of only 12 hours from the time of our request, setting, I believe, a record in the history of Security Council deliberations on peacekeeping operations. As we are all aware, Operation Alba was a complete success, helping to re-establish law, order and a legitimate Government in Albania.

As a member of the Council during part of the period covered by the report, Italy actively participated in the Council's efforts and work. The guidelines for our action were the principles of reciprocal trust, transparency and accountability, and the idea of promoting and defending the interests of the United Nations, not the interests of a particular country or group of member countries. What we did when we were in the Council — and I am delighted to repeat it here — was to inform others of what we were doing almost by the hour when this involved other parties, other Governments. I really and truly think that that should be the duty of every Council member.

In the area of the Council's working methods and procedure, we note with satisfaction the steps that were taken to improve the format of the report to the General Assembly. These measures will take effect in the preparation of the next report, covering the period 16 June 1997 to 15 June 1998. As indicated by the President of the Security Council's note (S/1997/451) of 12 June 1997, they relate to the timely submission of the report, as well as to various information to be included in it, dealing in particular with meetings of the Council and related decisions, matters brought to the attention of the Council and the activity of subsidiary organs. More important, the note provides for the attachment, as an addendum to the report, of brief assessments on the work of the Security Council, prepared under their own responsibility by representatives who have completed their functions as President of the Council. I believe that this is indeed a significant achievement, which goes in the right direction, the direction of promoting increased participation of all, and exclusion of none, and true transparency in the work of the Council. However, Italy believes that all these measures, albeit commendable, are still insufficient to adequately enhance the interaction between the Council and the General Assembly.

In this respect, I would like to emphasize once again the need for the report to provide substantive indications of the process leading to the Council's decisions. In particular, we continue to believe that the report should include a concise account of the Council's informal consultations on crisis areas, regional tensions, humanitarian emergencies and other issues crucial to local and global stability. We look forward to further improvements in the format and contents of the Security Council's report to the General Assembly. For this purpose, a good basis for analysis and discussion is provided by General Assembly resolution 51/193, adopted last December.

The Italian delegation also wonders if the time has not come to give serious consideration to ways and means of implementing Article 44 of the Charter. This Article states that when the Security Council has decided to use force, before calling upon a Member not represented in the Council to provide armed forces, it shall invite that Member to participate in the decisions of the Security Council concerning the employment of contingents of that Member's armed forces. We think that we need to ensure that countries which are asked to risk the lives of their soldiers — of their citizens — in peacekeeping operations are given a voice in the decision-making process of the Council.

Finally, Article 24 of the Charter states that the Members of the Organization:

> "confer on the Security Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security, and agree that in carrying out its duties under this responsibility the Security Council acts on their behalf".

The transparency of the work of the Council vis-à-vis all members of the United Nations is no less important than the Council's effectiveness in performing its mandate. We are confident that today's debate will reaffirm both values, in the interest of Member States, regional organizations and the United Nations as a whole.

Mr. Amer (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*interpretation from Arabic*): This discussion provides us with a further opportunity to follow up the activities of the Security Council, evaluate its work and consider whether the Council took note of our observations, responded to our proposals and implemented our requests. In its introduction, the report states that the Council has introduced improvements into the format of the report, rationalized its documentation and taken measures to make available draft resolutions to Member States that are not members of the Council, and organized briefings. Some may believe that these measures are important, but we see nothing new in them. They have not brought about the transparency on a broad scale called for by Member States. Consequently, the report remains a compilation of the official proceedings of the Council throughout the year, which makes it difficult for Member States to evaluate the work of the Council on these bases.

The decisions and presidential statements are presented without any background information about the consultations surrounding them or the causes leading to their adoption. It is very clear that the Security Council did not take into consideration a request made emphatically and constantly by Member States with regard to increasing the number of plenary meetings and to limiting the scope of informal consultations as strictly as possible. What causes us concern is that the Security Council still acts completely counter to this way. Its report states that it convened 115 plenary meetings, during which 52 resolutions were adopted and 54 presidential statements issued. It also states that the Council met in informal consultations for a total of over 342 hours.

The document we are discussing today contains no information about the substance of those consultations. This means that the Security Council either still persists in ignoring our requests, or considers that what took place in its consultations is a secret that Members of the United Nations that are not members of the Security Council are not supposed to know, although the Council is supposed to act on their behalf. The document before us states that the Council undertook consultations during the period in which three reviews of the sanctions imposed by Security Council resolution 748 (1992) took place. But the report does not reveal to us what took place during those consultations, the most recent of which lasted for over two hours.

We should have liked the Assembly to know that, during consultations, some States expressed their great appreciation for the positive initiatives of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya to resolve the conflict that took place as a result of the Lockerbie incident, and that they appreciated and valued Libya's flexibility in addressing the problem. We hoped that the report would mention that some of the members of the Council supported proposals by the League of Arab States, the Organization of African Unity and the Non-Aligned Movement to put on trial those suspected of having any link to the incident involving Pan Am flight 103. The report should have referred to the fact that only two States rejected the request by other members of the Council, using the Council's mechanism of the so-called consensus to obstruct the proposal that would have brought about a swift resolution of the problem and, accordingly, called for a lifting of the sanctions imposed on the Libyan people and brought to an end the anguish of the families of the victims.

Undoubtedly there are other issues which are of interest to other Members. These issues could have been addressed by the report with more clarity and in greater detail. What we see before us is a simple briefing to the Assembly on the dates of the Council's meetings, and a reproduction of statements and resolutions already adopted. This information is already known to Member States, and may be of use to researchers and students, but it cannot be used by Member States as the basis for a discussion of the work of the Council and an evaluation of that work.

Article 31 of the Charter allows States that are not members of the Security Council to participate in the discussion of any question brought before the Council, whenever such a State considers that its interests are specially affected. This Article has been applied to plenary meetings, but not to the holding of informal

consultations, which have unfortunately become the real framework for decision-making. On the basis of our experience with the Council, we believe that it has become necessary to undertake a reform of this practice. This is because of our belief that those who drafted the Charter did not intend the application of that Article to be confined only to plenary meetings, but to be extended to all meetings of the Security Council. Allowing concerned States to participate in the Council's consultations has great significance which becomes particularly apparent when the other party to the question under consideration is a member of the Security Council. This is the case with us at present. As is well known, my country was thrust into conflict brought about by permanent members of the Security Council. During informal consultations of the Council, they are allowed to express their views, while we are prevented from doing so, in contravention of the letter and spirit of Article 31 of the Charter.

The rights of States that are not members of the Council to clarify their positions during consultations has been stressed by many Member States including, for example, States in the Non-Aligned Movement. Today we reiterate this call and urge the swift implementation of this principle. Allowing a State to participate in a plenary meeting after the Council has already made its decision cannot influence the decisions already taken. Consequently it is only a formalistic practice, designed to rubber-stamp decisions already arrived at in camera and in secrecy which are totally unjustified.

The time has come for a drastic review of the working methods of the Council and to consider ways and means of enhancing serious and veritable cooperation between it and the General Assembly. We must undertake measures that will guarantee clarity in its work, so as to ensure that this organ is not a tool used by certain States to further their own objectives. That is why we must undertake several steps.

First, we must review or substantively amend the annual report of the Council so that it includes a full presentation of the background to decisions adopted and statements made by the Council. Furthermore, the report must include details about the deliberations that took place during consultations, together with more comprehensive reviews with regard to the work of the subsidiary organs of the Council, particularly the sanctions committees.

Secondly, the Council must follow proper work methods in order to enable Member States to participate in deliberations prior to the start of the decision-making process. Such States would then not find themselves presented with faits accomplis, the decisions already taken and their views with no influence on the outcome of the deliberations.

Thirdly, the Council must broaden the basis of its consultations with Member States and implement Article 31 of the Charter with regard to States involved in issues which are before the Council in the context of informal consultations.

Fourthly, the Security Council must enhance its relations with the General Assembly and consult with it on how to treat international issues, especially those relating to the maintenance of peace and security. The Assembly's role should not be confined to the mere approval of financial allocations for peacekeeping operations.

Fifthly, the Security Council must clarify its terms of reference and the way in which it makes decisions and arrives at positions. It must also make reference to Charter provisions, or any other legal principles, used in its decision-making process, with regard to every resolution or measure issuing from the Security Council.

Sixthly, it must find a mechanism that allows the General Assembly to hold the Council accountable, so that democracy can be guaranteed in its decision-making and double standards in its work can be avoided. We must also guarantee that such acts conform to the provisions of the Charter. This is extremely important, because some States have dragged the Council into situations that are totally outside its purview and its mandate under the Charter.

Seventhly, the work methods of the sanctions committees should be reviewed with a view to enabling Member States concerned to attend their meetings and to express their opinions and views on matters under consideration. There must also be a review of the guidelines for the work of these committees so that democratic principles can apply to their decisions and restrictions on applications submitted to these committees can be avoided.

In conclusion, we hope that the Council will give the proposals and observations which we and other several States have made the attention they deserve, and that the Council will, without undue delay, start improving its methods of work and those of its subsidiary bodies. This should be the beginning of a serious reform

process that will guarantee transparency in its actions in accordance with the provisions of the Charter, thereby responding to the requests of Member States, on whose behalf the Security Council acts.

Mr. Gomaa (Egypt): Let me start by thanking Ambassador Juan Somavía, Permanent Representative of Chile and President of the Security Council for the month of October, for his comprehensive presentation of the report of the Security Council to the General Assembly this year.

Allow me also to thank the Security Council Secretariat for its efforts in preparing the report in a timely manner that allowed its publication at an early stage of the session, thus responding positively to the need for its timely distribution which has always been a concern for us.

Since the discussion of the report of the Security Council to the fifty-first session of the General Assembly and the adoption of General Assembly resolution 51/193 on this agenda item, the Security Council has taken some steps towards improving the annual report of the Council to the General Assembly, both in the descriptive and analytical parts. These steps are reflected in the note by the President of the Security Council which stated some agreed changes to be introduced into the report to be submitted to the General Assembly covering the period from 16 June 1997 to 15 June 1998. These changes, though minimal, give a positive impression about the orientation of the Council towards more transparency and openness.

The most noticeable development in the note is that it opens the door for Presidents of the Security Council to prepare at the end of their presidency an assessment reflecting their evaluation of the work of the Council under their presidency. While we had hoped that these evaluations would be approved by the Security Council itself, we welcome this development as a first step, and hope that all Presidents of the Security Council will present these evaluations in a manner that could provide a complete evaluation of the year covered by the report.

Apart from these positive developments, there has been no progress in other aspects mentioned in General Assembly resolution 51/193.

The annual report before us, like those of previous years, continues to present no more than a compilation of documents already provided to delegations, at the appropriate time, which constitutes a waste of effort, material resources and time.

In our view, a comprehensive report should include the following.

First, it should contain a substantive, analytical and descriptive part reflecting accurately the activities of the Council in the year under review.

Secondly, for reasons of transparency, it should contain a record not only of the formal meetings of the Council, but also of its informal meetings, where most of the actions and decisions of the Council are agreed upon before being formally adopted, and which remain in total obscurity. Records are also needed for the formal and informal meetings of the sanctions committees. The Security Council should periodically conduct an overall evaluation of sanctions regimes and their impact on the populations in question as well as on third States affected by the imposition of sanctions. Also, an assessment of the results obtained by implementation of sanctions would help in the evaluation of the effectiveness of such sanctions. In this regard, the working paper on An Agenda for Peace prepared by the General Assembly and adopted by consensus in resolution 51/242 gains particular importance, as it reflects the general orientation of the General Assembly in this matter.

Thirdly, it should contain a clear definition of the presidential statements and statements to the press and their value from the legal point of view, taking into consideration the lack of any provisions regarding their validity in the provisional rules of procedures of the Security Council.

Besides the annual report, the Security Council should prepare and submit to the General Assembly special reports on specific situations, in accordance with Article 24 of the Charter. In this regard, my delegation, together with the delegation of Indonesia, submitted to the Security Council in 1996, a non-exhaustive list defining some of the cases in which the Security Council should present special reports to the General Assembly. We believe that this proposal should receive the attention it merits so as to promote the inter-relationship between the Council and the General Assembly, without affecting the balance established by the Charter between the two organs.

My delegation considers the exchange of information and views between the Security Council and the troop-contributing countries a successful example that should enhance the work of the Council. We do not wish these meetings to be transformed into routine or symbolic

occasions, but to become a forum for candid and transparent discussions on all issues related to specific troops participating in peacekeeping operations. There are still many ways and means to improve the relationship between troop-contributing countries and the Security Council. We urge the Security Council to continue its efforts in exploring additional measures that would help achieve a better relationship, which would certainly reflect positively on the performance of such troops. We stress in particular the need to involve troop-contributing countries in the decision-making process more actively than is at present the case. This we consider both a statutory responsibility and a pragmatic and rational necessity.

Other measures to improve transparency of the work of the Security Council on a daily basis should also be the focus of our attention. Enhanced briefings by the presidency of the Council continue to be a viable option in this regard. Also, transparency is required with regard to oral reports presented by the Secretariat to the Security Council. We continue to urge the Security Council to take full stock of various proposals made in this regard, including the Open-ended Working Group on the reform and expansion of the Security Council, in order to agree on the most appropriate way to enhance the transparency with regard to the daily functions of the Council.

Egypt is a few months away from the end of its term in the Security Council and is more convinced than ever of the need for an annual report, as well as special reports which would establish a more transparent relationship between the Security Council and the General Assembly.

We are sure that new non-permanent members of the Security Council will carry on further development of its reporting mechanism to the General Assembly and will work towards more transparency and openness. My delegation stands ready to participate in any collective effort towards that end.

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) *(interpretation from Spanish)*: I should like to express my heartfelt thanks to Ambassador Somavía for introducing this report and for his constant, daily efforts in this field.

The presentation of the report of the Security Council to the General Assembly should constitute a model of substantive reflection and debate not only on the work of the Council and the actions undertaken by that organ, presumably on behalf of all Member States, but also on existing and potential challenges facing the Organization in the sphere of maintaining international peace and security.

The requisite interaction between the Security Council and the General Assembly is provided for in Article 24 of the Organization's Charter, which states that the Council shall submit annual and, when necessary, special reports to the General Assembly for its consideration. At the same time, by virtue of Article 15 of the Charter, the General Assembly shall receive and consider annual and special reports from the Security Council. The Charter also provides that reports of the Security Council shall include an account of the measures that the Security Council has decided upon or taken to maintain international peace and security. It is therefore clear that the role of the General Assembly and the 185 Member States is to monitor the activities of the Security Council and, in the light of that exercise, to make recommendations, as they are authorized to do pursuant to Chapter IV of the Charter.

Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that the report submitted by the Council to the General Assembly once again constitutes a repetitious list of well-known resolutions and presidential statements adopted by the Council during the period in question and, unfortunately, does not include the necessary analyses of the root causes of the many and varied conflicts that the Security Council has dealt with or the basic principles and norms that guided the Council's actions.

There is no doubt that the voluminous format of the report of the Security Council is intended to reflect in some way the intensive work it has carried out in the past year. Nevertheless, in the opinion of the delegation of Cuba, a document like the report before the Assembly today is still of little use, and is valid only as a reference document. It is impossible to find in its pages, for example, reasoned evidence that, in the maintenance of international peace and security, the Security Council really has acted on behalf of and represented all the Organization's Member States.

One of the main aspects of the report is that relating to the Security Council's documentation. The delegation of Cuba recognizes that in recent years efforts have been made to improve this aspect of the work of the Council. We commend these efforts to the extent that they could contribute to the necessary process of democratization and transparency in the Council's decision-making, procedures and working methods. Nonetheless, we believe that these measures should, whatever the circumstances, be compatible with the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and with the spirit of respect for and observance of the rights and

obligations recognized by the Charter, both of Member States and of the Security Council itself.

We continue to attach special importance to the process of preparing with Member States, and consulting them on, the list of items under consideration by the Council. Transparency in this exercise should be the basic premise of the daily work of the Council, as well as a reflection of the Security Council's recognition of its obligations towards the Organization's vast membership.

My delegation has noted with concern that, yet again, the report of the Security Council does not give any information on or analysis of the main trends that emerged during its debates in this period. We believe that such an analysis should be the starting point for the adoption of any decision by the Security Council. The opinions expressed or the decisions promoted in informal consultations by just some members of the Security Council, and in particular by some of its permanent members, should not continue to validate the Council's actions. Only substantive consideration by the Council of the legitimate interests and concerns expressed by Member States during the debates can accurately guide the Council in its work and provide it with the necessary and impartial information that will enable it to assess the real causes of conflicts, counteract their consequences and take action to find just and lasting solutions, free from politically motivated prejudices and not dominated by the illegitimate interests of just one country or a small group of countries.

Decisions adopted behind closed doors and ultimately dictated by the hegemonic and political interests of some permanent members of the Council have only led, and will continue to lead, to artificial formulas and solutions whose justification and effectiveness, sooner rather than later, have been and will continue to be overmatched by the real causes of the conflicts.

Recently, some degree of transparency has entered the work of the sanctions committees of the Security Council, and their decision-making processes have become more independent. Nonetheless, we believe that these bodies are still bound by the designs of some permanent members of the Council that continue to impose their interests on the decision-making process, in total disregard for the opinion of the international community, the internal situation of the countries that are subject to sanctions regimes and the response of those countries to the decisions and measures applied by the Council.

In this context, we would like to reiterate the view that the annual report of the Security Council should contain a substantive assessment of the work of the sanctions committees, instead of confining itself to giving a factual list of the resolutions and presidential statements adopted on the question of sanctions or of the coercive measures adopted under Chapter VII of the Charter.

On many occasions, many Member States have advocated special reports by the Security Council on measures that the Council has applied or decided to apply or in order to maintain international peace and security. In our opinion, in current international circumstances, when the conflicts besetting the world are increasingly antagonistic and complex, the General Assembly must utilize, de facto and *de jure*, the powers and authority conferred upon it by the Charter.

The discussion of special reports of the Security Council would enable the General Assembly to stay duly informed of the decisions and solutions that the Security Council is preparing to implement or has implemented in connection with certain special issues, and it would give the Assembly the chance to voice in timely fashion the opinions and recommendations it feels are necessary on a particular conflict or on possible action by the Council.

As in previous years, the delegation of Cuba reiterates its willingness to participate actively and constructively in the consideration of the report of the Security Council to the General Assembly.

At present, the General Assembly is witnessing and participating in a process of reform of the Organization, aimed, as the Secretary-General has said, at enabling the Organization to meet the challenges of the day.

The Cuban delegation hopes that the work and actions of the Security Council, one of the principal organs of this Organization, entrusted with the maintenance of international peace and security, will not be exempted from the spirit, the scrutiny and the objectives that inspire the process of reform.

Cuba also hopes that both in the consideration of the report of the Security Council and in the process of reform, the wisdom and sovereign will of the General Assembly, the only universally representative organ of this Organization, will receive due consideration.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): The Chinese delegation wishes to thank the President of the Security Council for introducing the Council's annual report to the General Assembly.

In the past year the Security Council has done a lot of work and made fresh efforts in maintaining international peace and security. This should be duly recognized. We have also noted that starting this year, some alterations will be made to the format of the report. These efforts are undoubtedly aimed at enhancing the transparency of the Council's work. We hope that after such alterations, the report will help Member States better understand the work of the Council for the period covered.

In the wake of the changes on the international scene, particularly at this turn of the century, the Security Council, as a major organ of the United Nations, shoulders important responsibilities for the maintenance of international peace and security, entrusted to it by the Charter. We hope that in fulfilling its responsibilities, the Council will fully heed the views of Member States so as to act truly on behalf of the entire membership.

Here I would like to make three points regarding the work of the Council.

First, for historical reasons and as a result of various complicated internal and external factors, there has been constant turbulence and conflict in some parts of Africa in the past year. We are of the view that the Council should attach importance to African issues and, in handling these issues, fully respect the sovereignty, political independence and territorial integrity of African countries; carefully consider the reasonable proposals and demands of the Organization of African Unity and African countries; and support and cooperate with African countries in their efforts to maintain regional peace and security.

Peace and development are interrelated and mutually complementary. Efforts by the Council in the field of peacekeeping alone are far from enough. The international community should make greater efforts to bring about a fundamental solution to the question of development in Africa so as to help African countries move out of poverty at an early date and achieve lasting peace and stability.

Secondly, in recent years the Security Council has shown an obvious tendency to intervene in some countries' internal conflicts. We are of the view that in handling these important and complicated issues, the Council should observe the purposes and principles of the Charter, obtain the request or consent of the States or parties concerned, do its utmost to help resolve conflicts by peaceful means and encourage a proper role for regional organizations according to specific circumstances. It is necessary to refrain from practices such as interfering in a country's internal affairs under pretext of alleviating a humanitarian crisis, or authorizing military intervention by wilfully invoking Chapter VII of the Charter.

Thirdly, we have noted that instances of sanctions being authorized by the Council have increased in the past year. In principle, we are not in favour of using sanctions to settle disputes, and still less of using sanctions as a means of exerting pressure or meting out punishment. We are of the view that rather than rendering any help in the settlement of disputes and conflicts, sanctions only bring suffering to the people of target countries and cause economic loss and damage to third countries implementing the sanctions. Resolution 51/242, on sanctions, was adopted by consensus at the fifty-first session of the General Assembly. The principles set forth in that resolution should serve as guidelines for our decision-making. In the few cases in which sanctions are necessary, we should have a clear objective, scope and time limit and should take humanitarian factors into full consideration. It is not proper to impose sanctions readily while making it difficult to lift them.

Today we are here to review the work of the Council and hear the views of Member States, with a view to helping the Council summarize its experience and draw on our collective wisdom so that it can better fulfil the mission entrusted to it by the Charter. We hope that with the joint efforts of the general membership and the Council members, the Council will live up to the expectations of the world's people and make further progress in maintaining international peace and security.

Mr. Yel'chenko (Ukraine): Today's discussion of the report of the Security Council to the General Assembly, comprehensively presented by Ambassador Somavía of Chile, once again clearly demonstrates the special level of attention which the Member States give to this key political body in the United Nations structure.

It goes without saying that membership in this authoritative organ is considered to be an extremely important and honorary mission for each and every Member State. The growing competition for election to the Council is yet another proof of that.

At the same time, the right to hold one's finger on the planet's pulse is not just an honorary duty but is, first of all, tedious and strenuous work. This has been constantly proved by the essence of the issues considered by the Security Council and by its ability to prevent the further escalation of a number of conflicts before they entered an uncontrolled phase.

As recent positive examples of that, one may recall the operation of a multinational force in Albania and the assistance in holding free elections in Liberia and in Bosnia.

At the same time, we should admit that, in spite of substantial efforts on the part of the Security Council, many acute problems have not yet found their solution and continue to endanger international peace and security. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary that the Security Council continue to concentrate its efforts on the remaining unresolved problems.

I would also like to note some positive changes in the organization of the Security Council's activities. The work of that body has definitely become more transparent, and its methods, in our opinion, increasingly meet the requirements of the present time. We believe that the present report appropriately reflects this tendency, which is in conformity with General Assembly resolution 51/193.

In this context, we must note the introduction of orientation discussions held before the Security Council's adoption of responsible decisions. The participation of the interested parties in such discussions not only makes it possible to consider the problem in a comprehensive manner, but also provides for a search for optimal ways to achieve its solution.

Our delegation also notes with satisfaction the steady improvement of the mechanism of periodical consultations between contributing States, members of the Security Council and the United Nations Secretariat. This useful practice should be further developed. The Security Council should always be prepared to arrange such consultations at the request of potential contributing States in the event of emergency situations.

The delegation of Ukraine also fully supports the idea of introducing into the work of the Security Council the practice of preparing monthly reports on the outcome of that month's presidency, since this would contribute to the analytical essence of its report to the General Assembly. To this end, we propose to request the Council's working group on documentation, methods of work and procedure not only to study the issue of the preparation of the Council's annual report, but also to elaborate relevant proposals with regard to the practical implementation of such a concept.

Finally, I would like to draw the attention of the Assembly to the need to establish a closer interaction between the Security Council and the General Assembly, which would potentially improve the efficiency of the activities both of the Security Council and of the entire United Nations membership. We strongly believe that the practice begun at the beginning of this session of the Assembly of regular meetings between the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council should become regular. We would also recommend that such meetings be attended by the Secretary-General. Such meetings of the United Nations troika — a format successfully applied with reference to the activities of such recognized regional structures as the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) — could also be instrumental in the case of the United Nations. Acceptance and implementation of such a proposal would, in our view, serve to fulfil our desire to make the United Nations more effective and able to withstand the challenges of the present time.

I hope that the current discussion of the report of the Security Council and the proposals of Members will help that body better to fulfil its major mandate of maintaining international peace and security.

Mr. Eitel (Germany): Germany welcomes the presentation of the report of the Security Council to the General Assembly, and thanks the Council President, Ambassador Juan Somavía of Chile, for his introductory remarks. The report reflects the vast agenda the Council had to deal with between June 1996 and June 1997. The mere numbers tell us enough: 115 formal meetings held; 52 resolutions adopted; 54 presidential statements issued. The main questions considered by the Council were related to the former Yugoslavia, Angola, the Great Lakes region, the Middle East, Afghanistan, Burundi, Iraq and Kuwait and Tajikistan — without ignoring the importance of the many other issues the Council had to deal with.

Most of these facts are familiar. I will therefore not elaborate on them, but rather draw attention to three simple questions. First, has the presentation of the report changed since last year? Secondly, is there room for

further improvement? Thirdly, are there links between the report and Security Council reform?

I begin with changes since last year. Many of us still remember the widespread dissatisfaction expressed in previous years in the General Assembly regarding the report's format and contents. With this in mind, the General Assembly on 17 December 1996 adopted a resolution (51/193) on the report containing various recommendations to improve the interaction between Council and Assembly. This year's report demonstrates positive changes. It is again shorter, and it is presented earlier.

In reply to the second question, there is surely a strong need for further improvement in the report. A possible silver lining seems to be the agreement among Security Council members to take up some of the main concerns of the General Assembly and to include background lists; a description in chronological order of Council consideration and action; information regarding subsidiary organs of the Council such as sanctions committees; and information regarding documentation, working methods and procedures of the Council. The commitments are contained in the presidential note (S/1997/451) of 12 June this year.

From an analytic point of view, the most far-reaching future element will be the assessments of the work of the Council prepared by the respective Presidents of the Security Council and attached as an addendum to the report. Ambassador Monteiro of Portugal deserves credit for having given much thought to this new instrument for openness and transparency of the Council and for having set an early and voluntary example of a presidential assessment. The Republic of Korea, Sweden and the United Kingdom have also submitted assessments since then. All of them deserve applause and credit for providing analytic elements to the reports. If this direction is followed, the report may become a truly helpful instrument for more transparency in the work of the Council.

Thirdly, the links between Security Council reform and our agenda item — the report of the Security Council — are quite clear. The report is frequently mentioned in proposals for Security Council reform. For instance, the "full-picture" proposal of the previous President of the General Assembly (A/51/47, annex II) devotes an entire paragraph to the report. But, as is the case with other documents, it is only one out of many points of the reform package, from number of seats to elections to the veto right to transparency and working methods. Only the full range of these measures will finally bring about Security Council reform as we would like to see it, with a new team, a new spirit of work, new resources and new approaches.

Thanks to a surprising initiative taken last week, there is again currently much talk at the United Nations about Security Council reform. That initiative, which was sponsored by, among others, the champions of transparency, was submitted — as far as my delegation is concerned — out of the blue and without earlier discussion in the Open-ended Working Group. We shall have to adapt to this new style.

Even the best possible report of the Council will remain an insufficient instrument of transparency if the Organization does not take on the challenge of including it in the full picture of Security Council reform. Let us give the Security Council more tools and more people to use them smoothly. Let us not lean back and expect reform to happen. It has to be brought about. Germany will continue to work with other Members towards that end.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.